The Relevance of Classroom Audits and Student Feedback on Teacher

Robert Pfumbudzayi Machera, Botho University, Botswana Effectiveness

Abstract

Measuring of performance for lecturers' has become a popular event not only in the Botswana academic environment but in many parts of the world **(**Wingfield, 2011: 5). Being charged with responsibilities as an AAT Team Leader the researcher was interested in getting feedbacks for faculty members in his department. This study focuses on the relationship between classroom audits, student feedbacks and students' throughput. The results of this study revealed that there was no relationship between the classroom audits, student feedback and students throughput. Additional instruments / methods were recommended to evaluate lecturers' performance.

Introduction

At Botho University, classroom audits and student feedbacks are used to measure performance of each faculty member. What is classroom audit? According to Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003:43) a classroom audit is a process whereby a supervisor observes the lecturer in the classroom in order to obtain evidence on effective teaching. At Botho University a standard classroom audit is used during observation period. Apart from classroom audits an online student feedback is also used to measure the faculty's performance. This electronic student feedback is in a form of a questionnaire which is divided into the following three headings: Institution, Student and Lecturer.

Classroom audits are relevant to lecturers as they reflect positive and negative feedback in terms of performance. Positive performance may be used in the human resources department for promotional prospects and as well as for awarding salary increments. Negative feedback may be used for continuous improvements and training and development to the concerned individuals. The researcher was motivated to conduct this study in order to see whether it was appropriate for Botho University to finally conclude on how teachers perform using these two modes of feedbacks. The two modes of feedbacks appear to be very biased as they are embedded with the halo and horn effect.

Conceptual & Theoretical Framework

This research includes the concepts *of the halo and the horn effect* that brings in the phenomenon of biasness which is inherent in human beings. Furthermore this research used theories of motivation such as: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg Two Factor Model and Elton Mayo's Hawthorne effect.

Statement of the Problem

The above tools for measuring lecturers' performance are they effective and efficient? Classroom audits and student feedbacks are associated with the phenomenon of halo and the horn effect which was discovered by a psychologist Edward Thorndike. Foster and Ysseldyke (1976) revealed that the halo effect was also present in the evaluation of school children by their teachers. The problem was how accurately and appropriately these instruments were? It is from this background that the researcher was motivated to investigate the relationship between classroom audits, students' feedback and students' throughput rates at Botho University.

Aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between the classroom audits, student feedback and the students' performance as mechanisms for measuring teachers' effectiveness.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1 To ascertain the relationship between classroom audits, student feedback and students pass rates.
2 To ascertain models that motivate lecturers
3 To identify effective teaching methodologies that increase students' throughput
4 To establish other additional instruments that may be used to measure lecturers performance

Research Questions
The following are the research questions for this study:

1 What are the relationships between classroom audits, student feedback and student's performance?
2 What are the models that motivate lecturers?
3 What are the effective teaching methodologies that increase students' throughput?
4 What are other additional instruments that may be used to measure lecturers performance?

Contribution to the Knowledge Domain

The significance of this study is that, it would benefit different stakeholders including lecturers, students, universities and colleges. The universities and colleges would then be able to use appropriate tools or instruments to measure academic staff. If this study is published it would add to the body of knowledge as different techniques for measuring academic staff are discussed.

Literature Review

The research was also guided by different types of observation which includes: *direct and indirect observation*. Direct observation refers to a procedure whereby lecturers are observed by their supervisors during the contact sessions in their classrooms (Cleary, Happell, Lau and Mackey, 2013:64). Indirect observation is whereby lecturers are observed by any other means such as cameras without their knowledge. This study focuses on direct observation because indirect observation is associated with many ethical problems (Cleary, Happell, Lau and Mackey, 2013:66).

In addressing the problem of measuring performance, some theories and models have been selected to illuminate the possible answers to research questions posed above. According to Cleary, Happell, Lau and Mackey (2013:65) student feedbacks are constructive as they enhances educator's effectiveness. Administrators should not use student feedbacks and classroom audits as the sole performance measure (Langbein, 2007:419). Student feedback is a management monitoring mechanism of what is happening in the classroom (Buhagiar, 2013:60). Student feedback enhances the quality of teaching and improves the teacher student relationships (Crooks, 1988:449).

Research Methodology

The interpretivist paradigm was followed in this study. The goal of interpretivism is to deduce the participants' perceptions of reality and to draw conclusions about the truth, knowledge and authority (Lather, 1992:92). Northcutt and McCoy (2004:49) postulated that focus group interviews must be supported by other methods in order to

enhance the validity and reliability of the study. Therefore content analysis and personal interviews were used in order to triangulate the methods of collecting data. Triangulation of methods was also concurred by Mouton (2001:171) as it enhances the validity of the study. Personal interviews were conducted on 6 lecturers selected within 12 members of the focus group. There were comparisons of personal interview results and focus group in order to determine the truth from the participants. The findings of this research would be used in the Botho University strategic policy formulation.

Ethical Considerations

In his capacity as a researcher it is not good practice to plagiarise, or fabricate or falsify evidence or knowingly misrepresenting information or its source (American Anthropological Association (2012:2). The researcher managed to get the lecturers' consent to participate. Lucas and Lidstone (2000:55) argue that protecting individual autonomy has long been a central principle in educational research; therefore the researcher did not coerce any lecturer to participate in this study. Furthermore the researcher was not supposed to divulge any information to third parties as this would be an infringement of the participants' rights to privacy. Finally original or actual names and batch numbers were not used in this study.

Results / findings of the study

1 Content Analysis
The following table 1.1 below shows the results of student feedback, classroom audits and student final results for AAT Accounts Preparation module. The researcher interpreted the outcomes of the three variables to find out whether there was a relationship between these three.

Table: 1.1 Student Feedback, Classroom audits and pass rates

AAT – Semester 2 – Accounts Preparation Module (Jan – June 2014)											
Faculty	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Batch No.	9	6	7	12	4	5	10	11	3	2	8	1
Feedback												
Questions												
Qn.10	2.8	3.2	3	3.6	3.6	1.4	3.3	2.0	3.8	4.0	3.2	3.1
Qn.11	3.4	3.1	3	3.4	3.1	2.1	3.1	2.6	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7
Qn.13	3	2.4	1.4	3.3	1.7	1.8	2.9	1.4	3.8	2.7	2.7	1.3
Qn.14	2.7	2.6	2.3	3.6	3.3	1.4	2.7	1.9	3.8	4.0	2.7	2.6
Qn.15	2.8	2.8	2.1	3.0	3.5	1.6	3.0	3.1	3.8	4.0	3.2	2.7
Qn.16	3.3	2.9	1.9	3.4	3.6	1.4	3.1	2.3	3.6	4.0	2.9	2.6
Feedback	3.0	2.8	2.3	3.4	3.1	1.6	3.0	2.2	3.8	3.7	3.0	2.5

							3.7 7	2.4 4				
Audits	3	3	3.5	3.5	3	3.2			2.9	3	3	3

Pass Rate	33 %	44 %	40 %	40 %	38 %	65 %	40 %	71 %	90 %	49 %	48 %	35 %

2 Analysis of the results/ findings of the study

The results reflected that 4 faculty members (C, F, H and L) who were shaded in red in table 1.1 did not achieved a minimum required score of 2.8% on student feedback. The worse scenario on the student feedback is F who scored an average of 1.6%. On classroom audits H scored a 2.44 % which was very low and all the other faculty members scored 3% and above. The pass rates were not favourable only 3 faculty members (F, H and I) managed to achieve 65 % and above. The results reflected that 8 faculty members (A, B, C, D, E, G, J, K and L) scored below 50%. The results for the module were not pleasant and it was important to compare student feedback and classroom audits.

The findings indicated that the student feedback, classroom audits and pass rates for only 1 faculty member (I) were congruently positive. The pass rate for (H) was pleasant but the student rating and classroom audits were negative. This shows that there is an element of biasness embedded in the ratings. It is difficult to justify a pass rate of 71% when the faculty member was rated negatively. Faculty (F) was negatively rated by students but achieved a 65% pass rate. Faculty (D) was positively rated but achieved a negative pass rate; this reflects biasness in relation to human judgements. The results above have shown that there is no relationship between classroom audits, student feedback and pass rate. It was important for me to support this by conducting a focus group and personal interviews.

2 Focus group and personal interviews

2.1 Focus group interviews

Question
Do you think that there is a relationship between classroom audits, student feedback and pass rates?

Responses

1)   The majority of the faculty members agreed that there is no relationship between classroom audits, student feedback and pass rates.

2)   Faculty members responded that their students are of low intelligent quotient (IQ) hence perform badly.

3)   The group agreed that the classroom audits were conducted by staff members who lack educational background.

4)   The majority of the respondents agreed that training should be offered to students on the importance of student feedback because some students were not taking feedbacks seriously.

2.2 Personal Interviews

Interview Faculty member 'I'

Are you happy with the classroom audits, student feedback and pass rates?
"I am partially happy because my classroom audit is on the lower side it shows an element of biasness from my supervisor". "I scored 90% pass rate on the module which is exceptionally good and this is in line with student feedback of 3.8% out of 4%." "The problem is on the supervisor's rate which is far much lower as far as I am concerned."

Interview Faculty member 'D'

What is your comment on the student feedback and classroom audits in relation to your student pass rates?

"The student feedback and classroom audits were very positive but the pass rate was very low. The low pass rate was caused by lack of student preparedness and as well as a tight milestone". I have good interpersonal skills and this assisted me to be rated highly with my students".

Interview Faculty member 'H'

Can you justify your higher pass rate of 71% against lower scores for student feedback and classroom audits?

"The batch managed to get a higher pass rate through my efforts and the feedback and classroom audits were subjective since they are negative"

Interview Faculty member 'F'

Are you able to justify your 1.6% lower score on student feedback?

"The lower score of 1.6% is very biased as it is proved by a good pass rate of 65% followed by a 3.2% positive rating from the classroom audits".

Interview Faculty member 'C'

Your student feedback, classroom audits and pass rate were too extreme? How do your justify these extreme which were low student feedback, high classroom audits and lower pass rate?

"The students in batch 7 they hate me, I tried to motivate them but it proves that it's a folk of dull students." The students' feedback was biased and the 40% pass rate was contributed by lack of internal motivation in those dull students".

Interview Faculty member 'L'

"The students in batch 1 biased, I tried to motivate them but it proves that it's a bunch of dull students." The students' feedback was biased and the 35% pass rate was contributed by lack of intrinsic motivation within the students".

2.3 Summary

There was a triangulation of methods in order to rigorously get the truth from the findings. The focus groups and personal interviews highlighted the perceptions of faculty members in relation to the content analysis which was provided by the Faculty of Accounting and Finance. The results reflected that there was no relationship between classroom audits, student feedback and pass rates. Recommendations to improve the teacher evaluation were made in the following section.

Recommendations

The findings in this study proved that it was difficult to rate the teacher using student feedback, classroom audits and pass rate and hence made the following recommendations:

- Classroom audits should be conducted with independent evaluators who have educational background
- Arrange trainings and awareness for classroom audits
- Implement trainings and workshops for students on the importance of student feedback
- Include interpersonal skills and communication skills in the evaluation of faculty members
- Use a 360 degree performance appraisal to rate the faculty members
- Use Management By Objectives (MBO) to rate faculty members
- Encourage faculty members to enrol for Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) in order for them to improve their teaching approaches
- Take corrective action after student feedback and classroom audits
- Introduce a balanced score card to measure performance of faculty members
- Conduct separate motivational trainings and workshops for students and faculty members (popular motivational public speakers)
- Conduct students and lecturers get together workshops (networking platforms)
- Conduct workshops that explain Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg Two Factor Model and Elton Mayo's Hawthorne effect as they boost faculty members and students' morale. This eventually increases productivity and improves pass rates.

Conclusion

It is imperative to measure the performance of academic staff using appropriate instruments or tools. Lastly it is very rare to obtain results that are the same from *classroom audits, student feedback and students' results as these instruments are subjective in nature.* Finally the researcher challenged educators to come up with instruments, in which all the three variables (student feedback, classroom audits and pass rates) are in agreement or align to each other.

Reference

American Anthropological Association. (2012). *Statement on Ethics: Principles of* Buhagiar, M., A. (2013). Mathematics student teachers' view on tutor feedback during teaching practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 36 (1) 55 – 67.

Cleary, M., Happell, B., Lau, S., T and Mackey, S. (2013). Student feedback on teaching: Some issues for consideration for nurse educators. *International Journal of Nursing Practice* 19 (1) 62 – 66.

Crooks, K., J. (1998). Classroom research: implementing the scholarship of teaching. In Class- room assessment and research: *An update on uses, approaches, and research findings*, ed. T. Angelo, 5 – 12. San Francisco, CA: Jossey – Bass Publishers.

Foster, Glen; James Ysseldyke (1976) *"Expectancy and Halo effects as a result of artificially induced Teacher bias"*. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 21 (5): 519 – 533.

Langbein, L. (2007). Management by results: Student evaluation of faculty teaching and the mis- management of performance. *Economics of Education Review* 27 (1) : 417 – 428.

Lather, P. (1992). Critical frames in education research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives. *Women's studies international forum* 31 (2):87–99.

Lucas, K., B. and Lidstone, J, G. (2000). Ethical issues in teaching about research eth1ics. *Evaluation and Research in Education* 14 (1): 51–72.

Mouton, J. (2001). *How to succeed in your Master's & Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Northcutt, N. and McCoy, D. (2004). *Interactive Qualitative Analysis: A Systems Method for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
 Professional Responsibilities. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association. Available at: http:// www.aaanet.org/ethics/ upload / statement – on – Ethics – Principles – of Professional – Responsibility.pdf

Robbins., P. Odendaal, A. and Roodt, G. (2003). *Organizational Behaviour. Global and Southern African Perspectives*. Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa.

Wingfield, B. (2011). *Can we improve postgraduate degree throughput rates*? Afr JSci. 2011:107 (11/12), Art. #967, 2 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajs.v107i11/12.967

Contact email: rmachera@gmail.com